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Mason
A.A. 399.

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Charity-Schools Recommended,

IN A

Homily

SERMON

PREACH'D AT

St. James's Church in Colchester,

ON

Sunday March 26, 1710.

By *THO. BENNET, M. A.*

Rector of St. James's in Colchester.

Publiſh'd at the Request of the Trustees.

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Rom. 12. 13.

Distributing to the Necessities of Saints.

THE Word *Saints*, in Scripture Phrase, sometimes denotes those Persons who are truly Religious. Thus all the Psalmist's Delight was upon the *Saints*, that were in the Earth, *Psal.* 16. 3. and upon such as excelled in *Virtue*. At other times it signifies such as are separated by God from the rest of the World, and thereby made a *chosen Generation, a Royal Priest-hood, an holy Nation, a peculiar People*. In this Sense Christians are often called *Saints* by *St. Paul*, as being listed under the Banner of our Blessed Redeemer, even tho' their *Morals* were sometimes contrary to their Profession, and they allowed themselves in the Practice of such Abominations, as they ought to have abhorred. *1 Cor.* 14. 33. Thus the *Churches of the Saints* are the Congregations of Christians in general, as they are opposed to *Infidels*, without any Distinction made upon the account of their good or evil Lives, whether they adorn'd the Doctrine of God our Savior by a suitable Conversation, or had given Occasion to the Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme that worthy Name by the which they were called. Thus also the Word *Saints* is generally understood in my Text; and accordingly *Distributing to the Necessity of Saints* betokens a charitable Contribution towards the Relief of such poor Christians as are in hard Circumstances, and labor under Want.

Now the Providence of God does constantly order and direct the Affairs of this World after such a manner, that as some do abound in Wealth, and have all things richly to enjoy: so others stand in need of almost all the Blessings of Life, and through extreme Poverty are destitute, afflicted, tormented. Nor is this Distribution of things an Argument of our Heavenly Father's grudging to any of his Creatures, the full Enjoyment of

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this World's Goods, or of his Inability to bestow them upon every individual Person that is capable of receiving them: but a Demonstration of his infinite Wisdom in the Contrivance and Disposal of all Temporal Matters in Order to our Eternal Good. For did every Man wallow in Plenty, and possess an equal Share of Temporal Felicity; a very great Number of those Graces, the Attainment and Exercise of which are necessary to perfect and improve our Souls, and bring them nearer to God, and consequently to prepare them for eternal Happiness; would be impossible to us, and for that reason never practised by us. The Rich would have no Opportunities of exerting those Godlike Qualities of protecting the Oppressed, supporting the Afflicted, feeding the Hungry, cloathing the Naked, and comforting the miserable; nor would the poor have any Occasion for Patience under Calamities, Gratitude to Temporal Benefactors, and pouring out their Souls to God, when their Hearts are full of Trouble. And yet these and the like Duties have an unspeakable Influence upon our Minds; to correct, enlarge, refine and fashion them, and thereby to reduce all our Spiritual Faculties to an entire Conformity to God's Will; upon the Possession of which Conformity all true Happiness is built, whether in this or in the other World.

And oh! that every Christian were thoroughly convinc'd of this great Truth, That Almighty God suits every Man's Condition to the Inclinations of his Mind, and intends by the Peculiarity of his Fortune to make him truly good; so that all our Endowments, Incomes, Successes, Disappointments, Afflictions, Distempers, and the like, are either so many needful Medicines administered by the great Physitian of Souls, to purge away our Corruptions; or else Appointments of Religious Exercise and Labor, to employ and invigorate our Faculties, to create or increase Activity in us, and thereby establish us in a Spiritual Health and Soundness, which is the Foundation of all solid Bliss. Then might every Person, by reflecting upon his own Station in the World, and what *seeming* Accidents God has encompassed him with, learn, not only his own Defects, but also what Remedies Infinite Wisdom knows to be most expedient, and has actually appointed, for them. And by a Submissive Diligence in the use of those Means, by an intire Resignation to the unerring Will of our best Friend, by a grateful Sense of such an over-ruling Goodness,

which

which almost *drives* us forward to our own Real Good, we might most effectually make our Calling and Election sure, and take the speediest and safest Course of *increasing* our future Reward, and obtaining an *exceeding* weight of Glory.

Wherefore the Variety of Conditions in the World carries on God's great Design of bringing us to himself, and every Creature's Lot is intended to complete this universal Harmony. By various Methods God works upon the various Dispositions of Men, who, by moving suitably in their respective Spheres, do at once both benefit themselves, and promote the Happiness of others also. This admirable Mixture of human Affairs, this blending the several Estates of Men, this causing every Christian's Happiness and Duty to depend upon, be twisted with, and directed by, his Brother Christian's Case, demonstrates, that we lie under an indispensable Obligation to consider, not our selves only, but all that are round about us ; that we are bound to adapt our Designs and Actions to *their* Circumstances ; and so to imploy every Talent wherewith God has entrusted us, as may most of all conduce to the Common Welfare.

And particularly the Rich are hereby required to supply the Wants of the Poor. They are taught, that what Provision is in their Possession, ought to be spread abroad for public Refreshment ; that tho' they keep the Common Stock, yet 'tis not their own, but prepared by their Master for a Common Support ; that they are only the Stewards, but not the Proprietors, of God's Bounty ; and consequently, tho' they eat the more delicate Portions, yet they must not devour the whole ; that the rest of Mankind are part of God's Family, and that tho' they are forced to receive their daily Bread from the Hands of others, yet none of them ought to want it. So that wheresoever God has furnished the Rich with Objects, there they are bound to minister Charity, as of the Ability which God giveth.

But then those Persons, who are our Brethren, not by Nature only, but also by Adoption into the Church, have yet a better Claim ; and tho', as we have Opportunity, we must do good unto *all* Men, yet we must especially regard those that are of the Household of Faith. Thus in the Beginning of the Gospel, *the Multitude of them that believed, were of one Heart and of one Soul; neither said any of them, that ought of the things which he possessed was his own*

Acts 4: 32, 33, 34, 35.

but they had all things common. Neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were Possessors of Lands or Houses, sold them, and brought the Prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the Apostles Feet; and Distribution was made unto every Man according as he had need. Because we are Sons of God through Christ, therefore Brotherly Love must continue amongst us; neither must we forget to do good and communicate, because with such Sacrifices God, who is our Common Father, is well pleased. From the inexhaustible Spring of the Divine Love we every one derive our Portion; and since 'tis the Will of our Supreme Benefactor, that the Rich should be the Channels of his Bounty, and convey it to the rest of the World; certainly for them to withhold Good when 'tis in the Power of their Hands to do it, is to invert the Course of Nature. 'Tis a Rebellion against God, and the basest Ingratitude towards him, upon whose immense Bounty they themselves do every Moment subsist.

Let us therefore never pretend to wear the Name of Christians, if we want Bowels of Compassion, and refuse to tread in the Steps of our dear Lord, who with an unwearied Diligence went about doing good, and has assured us, *that by this shall all Men know that we are his Disciples, if we have love one to another.*

But this Love must exert it self, and be discovered by its Fruits. Bare good Words or good Wishes are no Proofs of a kind Heart, nor of any Use and Benefit to the distressed Members of Christ. If a Brother or Sister be naked, and destitute of daily Food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in Peace, be you warmed and filled: Notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the Body; What doth it profit? Such Expressions of Kindness without futable Actions, are detestable Hypocrisy, and may issue forth from Hearts harder than the nether Mill-Stone. Wherefore, let us not love in Word, neither in Tongue, but in Deed and in Truth; and consequently let the Afflicted, not only hear, but taste and feel our Love. For who so hath this World's good, and seeth his Brother have need, and shutteth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how dwelleth the Love of God in him?

Christ

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Christ has set us a very different Example ; for ye know the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that tho' he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, 2 Cor. 8. 9. that ye through his Poverty might be rich.

And shall those then, who profess themselves his Disciples, grudge to their Christian Brethren, even the Members of the Body of this very Jesus Christ, such Relief as they can conveniently spare? Will they not suffer the poor to eat of the Crumbs which fall from that Table, where they themselves are fed to the full and feasted?

But farther, what they bestow upon the necessitous, is not lost. For he that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given, will he pay him again. God has Blessings enough in Store to satisfy the most enlarged Appetite; he has Rewards in his Power sufficient to tempt even the most covetous Christian to be lavish in Charity. Even in this present World Alms generally increase the Stock of those that expend them. For the liberal Soul shall be made fat; and he that hath watereth, shall be watered himself: And he that hath a bountiful Eye, shall be blessed, for he giveth of his Bread to the poor. So that a Man thrives by generous Actions, and makes himself rich and happy by succouring the miserable. If thou draw out thy Soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted Soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy Darkness be as the Noon-Day; and the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy Soul in drougth, and make fat thy Bones; and thou shalt be like a watered Garden, and like a Spring of Water, whose Waters fail not.

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Do not fear, that you your selves shall want, what your Charity bestows; or that God will suffer your Estates to grow less, because your Love to your Brethren is great. Hear what God says to his chosen People; If there be among you a poor Man, of one of thy Brethren, within any of thy Gates, in thy Land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thy Heart, nor shut thy Hand from thy poor Brother; but thou shalt open thine Hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth. Thou shalt surely give him, and thine Heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him; because, that for this the Lord thy God shall bless thee in all thy Works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.

Deut. 15. 7, 10.

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The readiest way to arm our selves against the Uncertainty of Fortune, and to secure the Enjoyment of Prosperity, is this very method which I am persuading you to. For you know who has declar'd, that *he that giveth*

unto the poor, shall not lack. Nay, your Poverty shall reap the Benefit of these good

Prov. 28. 27. Actions; for the righteous is ever merciful and
Psal. 37. 26. lendeth, and therefore his Seed is blessed. How-

ever, the Happiness of Heaven is infinitely more worth than all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glory of them; and that Happiness is often promised to those, who by relieving the poor lay up Treasures there.

Heb. 6. 10. For God is not unrighteous, to forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have shewed to-

ward his Name, in that ye have ministred to the Saints, and yet do minister. Our holy Redeemer accepts of all such charitable Benefactions, as bestowed upon his own Person; and at the last Day he will openly declare to such merciful and tender-hearted Christians, in the Face of that universal Assembly; *Verily I say unto you,*

Matt. 25. 40. inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my Brethren, ye have done it unto me.

So that we have all possible Encouragement to the Practice of this Duty. 'Tis infinitely pleasant in it self; 'tis certainly the greatest Voluptuousness in the World; 'tis commanded by God; it procures us many Temporal Blessings, and transmits the same to our Posterity; the Reward of it is unspeakable and eternal, and the Veracity of God is engag'd to bestow it upon us. He owns the Mercy as shewn to himself, and condescends to be our Debtor for the Return and Recompence of it. *Let us not*

be weary therefore in well doing; for in due-

Gal. 6. 9. Season we shall reap, if we faint not. Let us

1 Cor. 15. 58. be steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the

Work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know (and
Experience will one Day convince us) that our Labour is

not in vain in the Lord.

But on the contrary, if we harden our Hearts against the Poor, and will not distribute to their Necessities; what infinite Vengeance hangs over our Heads? 'Tis possible God may severely visit for such inhuman Wickedness, even in this present World; for as

Prov. 11. 24. there is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; so
there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but

it tendeth to Poverty But in the World to come he will infallibly execute Wrath upon such unrelenting Sinners.

Then

Then will they infallibly curse their too great Love of this World, and wish that they had rather given all their Goods to feed the poor, than come into that Place of Torment. Infernal Flames will effectually melt their stony Hearts; and when 'tis too late, they will thoroughly be convinced of their Folly. 'Twill be then in vain for the covetous Miser to implore the Forgiveness of God; because then there will be no place for Pity, tho' he seek it with that inconceivable Importunity, that extreme Bitterness of Spirit, those Rivers of Tears, that Pathetic infernal Eloquence, which the Sense of insupportable Miseries will force from him. God will then shut his Ears, and be deaf to his Intreaties. *He shall have*

judgment without Mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and whose stoppeth his Ears at the cry of the poor, he shall one day cry himself, but he shall not be heard. James 2.13. Prov. 21.13.

Then shall the Lord upbraid such Wretches with their Cruelty to his own Person, saying, *inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me*; adding also this terrible Voice of most just Judgment, *Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.* Matt. 25.45. Verse 41.

Those astonishing Words will fasten the Bars of Hell against them. Then shall it be too late to knock, when the Door is shut; and too late to cry for Mercy, when 'tis the Time of Justice.

If 'twere possible for me to describe the Tortures of the Damned, and those inexpressible Joys also which the Righteous shall inherit; if I could represent the Despair and Anguish of the Covetous entering into the one, and the Transports of the Merciful entering into the other Portion; I say, cou'd I paint these things in as lively Colors as they deserve; then wou'd I doubt not of persuading the Miser to scatter his Gold, and exchange his Earthly Treasures for Bags that wax not old; to give a liberal Share of his present Wealth for a Reversion in the Life to come. He wou'd soon be perfectly satisfied, as much Pleasure as he takes in scraping up an Estate, that Charity turns to a far better Account, than heaping up Silver as the Dust, and fine Gold as the Mire of the Streets. A fair Prospect of our After-State would quickly alter Men's Notions, and give them a just Sense of the Reasonableness of all God's Commands, particularly that of *distributing to the Necessaries of Saints.*

Let us then seriously reflect upon the Consequences of our Actions; and consider, how great shall be the Reward of

of giving Alms, and how great the Punishment of denying them. Let us remember the Words of the Lord Acts 20. 35. Jesus, how he said, *It is more blessed to give than to receive.* And if we believe that our Saviour's Opinion is worth regarding, let us endeavor to act accordingly. Let the Rich in this World be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.

Give me leave now to apply what has been said, to the Occasion of this Discourse. It has pleased God in this degenerate Age, to touch the Hearts of many worthy Persons, and fill them with a wonderful Zeal for his Glory, and the Salvation of Souls. This Flame (blessed be our Heavenly Father) has already broken forth in many Corners of the Land, and spreads a new Light and Warmth in the World. It kindles a Sense of Religion in the Breasts of others, and these promising Beginnings give us grounds to hope for a thorow Reformation. Several Methods have been tried in order to this glorious end; but none seems so proper, as that which has of late been begun, and so happily pursued, in this Town.

There is little Reason to expect, that much good will ever be done upon such as are grown old in Carelessness or open Debauchery. Their evil Habits are probably confirm'd; they are so much accustomed to their ways, that they will not be persuaded to forsake them. Wherefore a Trial must be made upon that Generation which is now springing up, and Endeavors must be used to form their Minds to Virtue in their tender Years. A Religious Education of Youth seems to be the only successful way of amending the World; and if it be universally secured, cannot fail of prodigious Effects.

But alas! There is a vast number of People whose very Poverty sinks them into the grossest Ignorance, and consequently into the vilest Debauchery. Thus they propagate such a Race of Men, as are a standing Reproach to Human Nature; who are but a small Remove from mere Brutes. They know scarce any thing of a Saviour, a Gospel-Covenant, and the Rewards and Punishments of another World; but are almost Infidels in the midst of a Christian Country. And no Wonder, then, if their Morals are proportionably vicious. They are indeed commonly Baptized, because 'tis customary; but they seem to leave their Religion at the Font, and to lay it aside as soon as 'tis put on.

Cer-

(II)

Certainly 'tis enough to make the Heart of a good Man bleed, to meet with such deplorable Objects; and yet they swarm in almost every Place, but especially in the larger Towns. And therefore no Charity surely can be more acceptable to God, and more beneficial to Mankind, than that which is bestowed in the Education of such wretched Creatures, who for the want of Religious Principles, are almost necessitated to be the Devils Slaves. They have Souls as well as our selves, and are capable consequently of being truly good or perfectly evil; and the Want or Enjoyment of a pious Education must give the Turn, and determin their Fate. For as they will inevitably be over-run with all manner of Sin, as the necessary Consequence of their deplorable *original Corruption*, unless Care be taken in due Time to root up their Vices, or at least to restrain the Growth of them: so if proper Methods be used, if their tender Years be diligently watched, if their Souls are cultivated betimes, if good Seed be sown and plentifully watered, if Christian Principles be instilled, and suitable Endevors used that they may grow in Grace; they are capable of producing all the Fruits of the Spirit, and being as bright and remarkable Examples of Christian Holineis, as those who are born to much larger Fortunes.

Now those Rules which are already so happily fixt, and I hope will be as carefully observed, in this place, cannot fail of Success, if God vouchsafes his Blessing (as he certainly will) to the pious Endevors of those who are the Promoters and Encouragers of this excellent Work. For one main Source of the Ignorance and Vice of the poorer sort, is this, That they do not learn to read well, because their Parents cannot afford to pay for their Schooling: And if any are by chance put to School, they seldom are kept there so long, that they can read freely and with Ease; and consequently when they leave the School, their Reading being laborious and unpleasent to them, for that reason they immediately forget it, or at least never throughly master it. Whereas if they were kept so long at School, that they could read with Pleasure, the Exercise of reading would be so far from affrighting them, that they would be delighted with it; and consequently good Books (which, unless they can read well, they are scarce capable of receiving Advantage by) wou'd insensibly fill 'em with good Principles, and entice them to suitable Practices. For whatever some may imagin, everlasting Preaching in public will never make People good, unless their private

vate Application crown our public Endeavors. And therefore reading well is the only way to keep those who cannot think closely and regularly (which never is, the ignorant Person's Talent) rightly and duly employed at home. Good Books therefore will perfect what is begun at Church; and if good reading be once given them, good Books are easily furnished, and at a small Charge.

Again, The poorer sort are seldom taught their Catechism. And indeed how should they learn it? 'Tis true, the Ministers ought to examin them in it: but then they must first be capable of Examination. And how is this possible, if the Parents are as ignorant as their Children, and cannot read it; and the Children are not put to School to learn it? Whereas if this very little, but most excellent Book, this admirable Summary of Christian Faith and Practice, were once gotten perfectly by heart, and the Children (which is no difficult matter) did but understand the Sense; this very Book I say, wou'd make them truly wise unto Salvation. 'Tis a short and plain Rule, and if applyed by an honest Mind, wou'd readily direct them in all ordinary Cases. They wou'd always know what to believe, and also what to do or forbear, because their Catechism says *this* or *that*. Some line or other wou'd constantly occur to their Memories, and lead them to Virtue, or keep them from Sin.

I must add; that the Children of the poorer sort are not sufficiently kept at work. I do not say that none of 'em do work; for some of them are constrained to do it, before they can eat. Their Hands are forced to fill their Bellies, and if they won't exercise the one, they must starve the other. But this I say, that many poor Children are bred up in Idleness, that is, they are *taught* and *suffered* to beg. I would by no means discourage true Charity; but I profess, I think it a Fault to relieve such Creatures. If you would get them some Work, and feed them well, when they had done it, you'd do them a real Kindness, and by this means be rid of their Company too. Whereas did they work all that Time which they spend in Rambling about, and lying at the Doors of the Rich in expectation of Alms, they might easily provide for themselves; especially if the Rich would be so kind as to take Care that they should not want it. But if the Children of the poor once get a Habit of Idleness, 'tis seldom or never left; nay, it grows stronger by Age, till 'tis utterly incorrigible.

Now I appeal to any considering Person, what sort of Creatures those must be, who cannot read, and have no Prin-

Principles of Religion, and are inveterately lazy. Why, they are too bad for Servants, dangerous in the Neighborhood, always ready to commit the worst of Villanies, trained up for the Gallows, and secure of Damnation.

What a Blessing then must that Education be, which is the Reverse of all this; and what greater Good are you capable of doing, than by encouraging and supporting *Charity Schools*? where those poor Creatures, who must otherwise have gone on in the high Road to temporal and eternal Destruction, are taught to read well, and instructed in their holy Religion, and inured to labor from their Infancy; that they may prove useful to the World, Friends to themselves, true Servants of Christ, and in the end inherit eternal Glory.

I do not mention what cloathing you bestow upon them; for tho' that Charity be truly *commendable*, and what God will not fail of Rewarding; yet really the Education you afford them, is so unspeakable an Advantage, that if every one of you cou'd bestow upon every one of these Children Estates equal to your own, the kindness wou'd not be comparable to the Charity of their Education. For this is a Mercy to the better part; this is a Spiritual Advantage; 'tis saving their Souls from Death; Nay (with all Humility I beg leave to use the Expressions) 'tis being, under the blessed *Jesus*, Saviors and Redeemers to them.

And now, my Brethren, I wou'd encourage you to proceed in this noble Work; but blessed be Almighty God, you do not need Encouragement. I wou'd also assure you in God's Name, whose Ambassador I am, that you shall be rewarded for it; if any Assurance cou'd be added to that which you have already *received*. For that inexpressible Comfort, which cannot but spring up in your own Breasts, and which is the natural Result of such truly Christian Labors, is an abundant Recompence for what you are doing (I had almost said) even tho' there were no Eternity of Happiness in Heaven. And therefore I cannot but heartily pity the Covetous, who do not know the Pleasure of being charitable.

But *yet* your *present* Satisfaction and Delight in doing good, is less than a meer Trifle, if compared with what will follow. This is but an Earnest and Pledge of that Joy, which shall not only be far greater in degree, but also never end. And the Conscience of your intending this Charity purely for God's Glory and the good of Souls, is an Obligation of the Spirit, God's own Voice and Attestation within, That if ye hold out thus unto the end, ye shall undoubtedly be saved. I

I wou'd rather beg leave therefore, to apply my self to those (for I am sorry to add, that even so bright an Example has as yet left some of that number in this Neighborhood; to those, I say) who have not hitherto contributed to the Enlargement of your Design, and cast in their Offering to the common Stock of this best employed Charity. I wou'd intreat them to consider, how they will answer it to God, if they cannot be prevail'd upon to assist in this Undertaking, and to increase the Number of those who enjoy this inestimable Blessing.

As for the Charge, 'tis very small; especially if compar'd with the good it manifestly does. Besides, if God has done so much for *you*, will you not make some Returns to *him*, even tho' ye should somewhat *straiten* your selves, by endeavoring to bring Souls to Christ? I wou'd ask you this plain Question (for upon this Occasion I take the Liberty of being exceedingly plain) Which of you cou'd not spare Six Pence a Week out of your *vain* Expences, upon fine Cloaths, strong Liquor, Diversion, or other particulars, wherein you might *easily* abridge your selves? And if every one wou'd but spare thus much, what wou'd *such* a Sum do, when added to the present Collections? 'Tis hardly credible, what Influence so small a Charge wou'd have upon the whole Country; what a vast number it wou'd bless with a good Education (I must also add) what Favors it would draw down from Heaven upon your Persons and Families. And cannot so small a Pittance be wrung from you?

Remember, that that Hour will certainly come (God only knows how soon) when each Person here present shall leave this earthly Tabernacle, and depart into another World. Be persuaded therefore to place your selves upon your Death-Beds, and consider what Views and Notions you will *then* have, what Supports you will *then* stand in need of. Nothing will afford you more solid Comfort in that Condition, than to reflect upon what you have expended for God's sake. The Money which your Recreations, your Entertainments, your Equipage, and other Follies have cost you, will administer no Satisfaction; because 'tis utterly lost and gone, and if you have no reason to fear a *Punishment*, yet there is at least no *Reward* to be expected for it. Whereas what you have bestowed in Alms, what you have lent to your dear Redeemer, is a Treasure which you may carry with you, and reap infinite, unconceivable, eternal Advantage by. Will you not *then* wish, that you had spared as much as 'twas possible from

from your selves, and converted it to pious Uses? That you had made a *less Figure* here, to make a *greater* hereafter? That you had sacrificed the Reputation of dying more wealthy, to obtain a larger Share of neverfading Glory? Wou'd you not, I say, in those Circumstances, bitterly reproach your selves for the neglect of such glorious Opportunities; and wish that your Children had wanted those few Pounds, which will add very little to *their* Fortunes, but might have encreased *your own* Happiness to an immense degree?

Oh, that we cou'd be prevail'd upon to act always, as we wou'd be *glad* to have acted, when we come to die; that all our Designs and Endeavors wou'd tend, not barely to aggrandize our selves, or gratify our Inclinations for the present, but to lay the Foundation of Celestial Happiness, and amass Wealth in another World! Then shou'd we be forward to labor in Religion; and rejoice at every Possibility of doing good, much more than if the brightest earthly Diadem were laid at our Feet. Then shou'd we, with an unwearied Diligence, *search* for ways of pleasing our *great Master*, and think no Pains sufficient in his Service. How wou'd Christianity then flourish? What a flaming Zeal wou'd then burn within us? How eager shou'd we be in all Instances of Duty? How impatiently shou'd we strive, not only to equal each other, but also to exceed our selves; to grow every Moment more fervent and active in all the Works of the Spirit, till we arrive at such a Perfection in Holiness, as is not in this World capable of Increase, such as Heaven will confirm and consummate, and such as none but God can fully reward.

If these great Truths were rivetted in our Breasts, if we were resolved to act up to the height of our Principles, if we were willing to practise according to what we profess, and longed for nothing so much as being in every respect, and to the utmost of our Power, *Christians indeed*; we shou'd then require no Spurs to this Charity, which I am recommending to you. The bare Proposal of that which every Man confesses to be truly good, most grateful to God and most beneficial to the World, wou'd enkindle a Fire in every Soul, and prompt him forward to a liberal Contribution, to a generous and cheerful Offering of what his Circumstances will suffer him to give (as God has prospered him) for the carrying on this noble Design, which manifestly tends to the very best Purposes, and cannot possibly be wrested to a bad one.

Re-

Reflect, my Brethren, upon the wretched Condition of those poor Children, which are not already thus provided for. They are the Members of Christ's Body as much as your selves; and every one of them does, by his apparent Necessity, beg in Christ's Name. 'Tis your dear Lord and Savior that asks the Alms at your Hands; and he desires no more than you can well save from your Vanities. Can you deny your Savior so *small* a Sum? Will you give *nothing* to him that *died* for you? Will you squander away unnecessary Cost in a Garment, or Wine, or Furniture, rather than *save a Soul* with the same Money? Had you rather a Member of Christ should eternally perish in Hell, than want some small Bauble, or thwart some little Humor, to rescue him? Can you act thus? Can you thus neglect the Salvation of others, and yet hope to be saved your selves? Oh! do not flatter your selves with vain Expectations. If such Motives as these have no Influence upon you, better were it for you that you had never been born.

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany Salvation, tho' we thus speak.

Heb. 6. 9.

I cannot but fancy, that I see your Hearts open and enlarged; nay, that every one of you is forming a Resolution of helping forward this glorious Work. May your Resolutions therefore be ripen'd, and brought forth into Action. May every Man that has Little, do his Diligence to give of that Little; and may others be bountiful as God has enabled them. May the visible Blessing which has already attended this Business, allure all those that are capable of advancing it, to partake, not only of the present Honor and Comfort, but also of the eternal Recompence of it: May such Attempts be in due time elsewhere made; and may God be present with the Authors, increase the Numbers, and multiply the good Effects of them. May such Fountains of well doing refresh the Nation. May Reformation go on and prosper, till our Lives are agreeable to our Profession; till we are reformed in Practice as well as in Doctrine; that God may have a Church amongst us without Spot or Wrinkle or any such thing, but that it may be holy and without Blemish; that he may delight over us to do us good; that we may be the Joy of the whole Earth; and at length be translated into that blessed Place, where nothing that is unclean shall ever enter.

Which God of his infinite Mercy grant, &c.

F I N I S.



